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complex content of human life is the source of the error in each system and of the ceaseless procession of systems which make up the history of philosophy.

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## THE ETHICAL MOTIVE.

NOT least among the contributions to ethical science which Mr. Herbert Spencer has made in his "Principles of Ethics" is the clear and comprehensive description of conduct, viewed as a natural phenomenon admitting of scientific observation and analysis, which is presented in the opening chapters. We are there shown that conduct is distinguished from actions in general by the exclusion of acts which are aimless or purposeless. Conduct is the activity of a volitional being who perceives that he has the power to modify his own existence, and who sets before himself an end to be attained. His conduct, then, differs from the merely physiological activity of his body in being made up of a series of acts adjusted to the end which he has in view. Good conduct, in turn, may be described as consisting of acts which as means are, on the whole, well adapted to the attainment of an end which a critical judgment pronounces to be in itself worth while, satisfying to a reason that has examined all of those possible ends or goals of action which have thus far appealed to the mind.

If this description of conduct is accepted as being a fairly accurate one, and I think that moralists of all schools admit that, as a general account of conduct, Mr. Spencer's chapters are true, a scientific study of morality necessarily includes a critical examination of the ends which purposive activity attempts to realize, and also a critical examination of the motives by which we are impelled towards the attainment of the end in view.

The study of ethical ends, as all readers of moral systems are painfully aware, has produced many differing hypothetical goals of action. We have theological ethics, which assume that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for-

ever. We have utilitarian ethics, which assume that the only practical good is the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and we have idealistic ethics, which assume that the perfection of the rational and spiritual nature of conscious personality itself is the only end which can satisfy the rational mind.

In the study of motives, as it has found objective expression in moral literature, four distinct hypotheses may be discovered. The first of these is, that there is a moral intuition which is at once a revelation of right and an impelling force, driving us onward towards the attainment of our moral goal. The second hypothesis is, that there is a moral instinct, which has either been created in us as a blind but trustworthy guide, or has been developed in us by evolutionary processes through the experiences of countless generations of experimenting creatures who have learned to go right after trying all the possible ways of going wrong. The third hypothesis is, that there are certain classes and groups of feelings more definite than instincts, which move us to moral action; the feelings, namely, which we know as sympathies and affections. The fourth hypothesis is, that our rationally conceived ideas of ethical ends themselves react as motor forces, and draw or impel us to attempt to realize the conceived ends.

These four hypotheses are commonly held to exhaust the possible explanations of ethical motive.

In the present paper I shall attempt to prove that neither any one of the four hypothetical assumptions about the ethical motive, nor any combination of them, gives us an adequate account of the psychological process whereby our voluntary acts are organized into that series which we describe as conduct. There is a phase of this process that has appeared to me to have a very great importance, and which, I think, has hitherto not received a sufficient attention.

Since moral conduct consists of acts adjusted to ends, it is, of course, impossible to discuss motives without first stating one's position in regard to ends. For my present purpose, however, it is not necessary to decide between utilitarianism and idealism. It is sufficient to say that both of these schemes

of conduct include in their conception of ends the notion of a relatively large and growing mental life, and of a more varied voluntary activity, as distinguished from a diminishing consciousness, and from a reduction of purposive to automatic or mechanical action. The utilitarian does not set before himself a temporary or exhausting pleasure; he pictures rather the happiness which is concomitant of large and varied life. The idealist no less distinctly looks to the enlargement of the rational and spiritual nature as an essential phase of that perfection which he desires.

For the purposes of the present argument, then, it is sufficient to say that the moral motive is one that makes for largeness of conscious life.

If so much is granted, the reader is prepared for a suggestion which I have now to make. It is that, as a result of studies which, in recent years, have been made in quite another part of the psychological field, we are now, for the first time, in a position to make discoveries in regard to the origin and the strength of the moral impulses and in regard to the conditions of their growth.

The studies to which I refer are those that have been made in the psychology of economic activity, and which have undertaken to explain the nature and to formulate the laws of economic motive. Most readers, even those who are not particularly interested in economic discussions, have by this time some notion of the modern psychological theories of utility and value. The names of Cournot, Walras, Menger, and Jevons have crept into current literature, and nearly everybody knows the essential doctrine for which they stand. We no longer think of utility as a quality inherent in objective things or conditions. Objects of our strongest desire afford us more or less satisfaction according to ever varying circumstances. Food itself may please or disgust according as we are still hungry or have over-indulged the appetite. Every commodity offered in the market appeals strongly or in slight degree, or not at all, to the desires of possible purchasers, according as they have been able already to satisfy those desires in some measure through a preceding supply. Psycho-

logically, then, utility and value are phenomena that diminish as the consumption of the means of satisfying desire increases. Every want admits of satisfaction, and every satisfaction may become satiety.

There are certain implications of this theory that have not yet been duly examined by either economists or psychologists. It is implied that an economic satisfaction is the pleasurable activity of a particular organ or group of organs, at a particular time and in a particular way. For example, to return to the illustration of the consumption of food, it is not maintained, and, of course, no one could maintain, that food has a diminishing subjective utility at all times. Its value to the organism falls as hunger is appeased. But with the return of appetite the subjective value of food again rises. In like manner it could not be maintained that the subjective value of food must follow a descending curve if food articles had the power of ministering in equal degree to every organ of the body. If, for example, a single class of material goods afforded us all the pleasures that we craved, so that by means of commodities fit for food we could satisfy the desires for clothing, for shelter, for amusement, and for instruction, the subjective value of these commodities would remain forever at their maximum point. Subjective values then rise and fall simply because each commodity has the power of satisfying only the cravings of some particular organ or group of organs, and usually under some particular combination of conditions existing at a given time.

Of course, it is unnecessary to prove that within certain limits these particular satisfactions indirectly minister to other organs than those immediately active, and, indeed, to the whole organism. Food not only satisfies the immediate cravings of the stomach, but it affords the pleasures which spring from the organic sensations of vigor. Nevertheless, it is perfectly obvious that there are limits beyond which the satisfaction of a particular organ or group of organs may deprive other organs of those means of satisfaction which they crave, inhibit various activities, and deplete the entire organism. The man who should spend all his substance upon his

table would for that reason be compelled to do without other material gratifications; he undoubtedly would starve his intellectual nature, and, sooner or later, he would reduce a large part of his physical system also to a condition of atrophy.

This implication of the modern theory of subjective utility is so obvious that further insistence upon it would seem to be quite unnecessary. A second implication, if not quite so obvious, is not less certain. If the cravings of a particular organ or group of organs are being liberally met with appropriate satisfactions, while other organs suffer deprivation, the neglected organs set up a protest, which usually is sufficiently importunate to compel us to attempt their appeasing. The hunger of the neglected parts of our nature normally takes possession of consciousness, and diverts our attention and our effort from the organ which is receiving more than its due share of indulgence. Now this hunger of the entire organism for a varied satisfaction, and this protest of the entire organism against the over-indulgence of any one appetite, is obviously a phenomenon quite distinct from those particularistic desires for specific satisfactions which in recent years have been recognized as the specific economic motives.

Thus distinct and general, the craving of the organism for integral satisfaction, and the organic protest against any excess of particularistic indulgence, constitute, I think, the ethical motive in its original, physiological form.

There is thus a real and fundamental difference between the economic motive and the ethical motive. The economic motive is the desire for a particular satisfaction of a particular organ in a particular way at a particular time. The ethical motive is the desire for the varied satisfaction of the entire organism through continuing time.

This account of the subject is, of course, merely physiological; and I suppose that no modern psychologist will object to discovering that even ethical phenomena have their origin in physiological processes. Let us, however, turn to the psychological aspect. A sharp organic craving for a particular satisfaction always receives a preferential attention in consciousness. It is this preferential attention which is liable

to be unduly continued, and therefore to cause excessive indulgence. A mere organic craving would diminish as the point of satiety was approached. The least intelligent animals are less likely than man to carry any particular form of consumption or activity to excess. It is therefore even more true of man than of the lower animals that the hunger and protest of neglected organs must take possession of consciousness before the course of consumption or activity can be diverted into new channels. In other words, the ethical motive plays psychologically a larger part in beings having the greater power of attention, and especially of attention colored by imagination.

In more technical terms, then, the economic motive is the sum of those normal desires to which, at any given moment, we are giving a preferential attention. The ethical motive is the sum of those normal desires to which, at the same given moment, we are denying attention or forcing out of consciousness by neglect, but which will presently assert themselves strongly enough to divert attention.

Strong confirmation of the truth of this analysis is afforded by the popular view of that class of economic activities which is most remotely and indirectly related to the immediate satisfaction of particular wants. If the foregoing reasoning is sound, the prudent and enterprising man, in laying by a portion of his income, converting savings into working capital, energetically improving new conditions, and organizing industrial methods, is acting from mixed motives. He is moved partly by economic, but partly, also, by powerful ethical desires. It is therefore interesting to remember that these forms of industrial activity have always been regarded as no less ethical than economic. Saving, frugality, thrift, have, from immemorial time, been inculcated as duties. In other words, when economy broadens out into a provision for the expansion and the future development of life, economic activity merges into ethical conduct.

In this broad distinction between economic and ethical motives, I think we may discern the ground of a persistent dissatisfaction with utilitarian ethics. The common mind does not to any great extent think of pleasure in general

terms. The average man thinks of pleasure concretely and specifically, in terms of particular satisfactions. Duty or right, on the contrary, the average man thinks of vaguely, as something indefinable imposed upon him by a mass of feelings which he cannot analyze and does not understand, but which constrain him to inhibit specific desires and to deny himself particular enjoyments. The common mind therefore associates self-denial rather than pleasure with organic well-being and with a continuous development of either the bodily or the mental nature. The end to which the acts of the ordinary individual are adjusted is a vaguely conceived "welfare" or "salvation." It is only the cultivated mind that can distinctly picture to itself a greater pleasure, a deeper happiness, as the concomitant of a larger and sounder life. Consequently, the common mind always shows a strong antipathy to systems of ethics which make pleasure the end of moral action. Yet objectors have seldom been able to meet the utilitarian argument. In other words, it has been felt, rather than clearly seen, that between economics and ethics there is a distinction which should be discovered; and that there must be something wrong about an ethical theory that calls both motives by the same name.

Another and vastly more important phase of popular thinking is similarly explained by the foregoing account of the ethical motive. When we have discovered that the ethical motive arises as a reaction of the organism upon the organ, of vague feelings *en masse* upon specific feeling, we have discerned the real source of moral authority and the origin of that half-superstitious conception of authority which still holds the common mind in dumb distrust of reason. The mass of mankind thinks of authority as something so absolutely different from reason that it may oppose reason. The mass of mankind also thinks of moral conduct as a course of action which is prescribed by authority; while it thinks of economic activity as being indicated and guided by reason. The explanation is not difficult to find if there is a real and great difference between the economic and the ethical motive. By authority the average man means a power which con-



strains his will without his knowing or being able to find out why. By reason he means a knowing why. Now it is perfectly clear that, in pursuing economic ends, the average man thinks that he knows why he does this or that. He acts in a particular way because specific, clearly apprehended wants clamor for satisfaction. It is not less clear that, in obeying what he regards as an ethical mandate, the average man acts without knowing why. A mass of vague feelings and ideas arise within his consciousness in protest against certain indulgences, or constraining him to something which he feels to be a duty, although he cannot possibly explain to himself why he feels or calls it duty. That is to say, the average man can clearly apprehend the economic motive; he knows, or thinks he knows, the whys and the wherefores of his economic life; and therefore he thinks that the economic life lies within the domain of reason. The average man cannot clearly apprehend the ethical motive, analyze it into its elements, or discover its origins. He does not know why he is moral; yet he feels himself constrained to try to be moral. Therefore he believes that morality is imposed upon him by authority; in other words, by a power that constrains his will without revealing to him how or why; and he regards with distrust any intrusion of reason into the ethical domain. So conceiving of reason and authority, and having within his own consciousness an experimental acquaintance with authority, the average man easily passes from a deference to the moral authority that is internally known, to a reverence for any external authority that is impressively asserted, and allows himself to regard the external authority as, like the moral authority within himself, superior to reason.

Has this discrimination of the ethical from the economic motive a practical value, or is it of merely theoretical interest?

It has, I think, a twofold practical value.

First, if a truthful account has been given of the relations which the common notion of authority bears to the ethical motive, the importance of cultivating rationalistic habits of thought is strongly emphasized. Moral authority is real, and, in a sense, it is independent of reason. It is deeper, more

fundamental, more nearly primitive as a part of human consciousness than reason is; but it is not independent of organic conditions, and therefore is not apart from or in any way independent of the complex processes of natural causation. Reason alone can enable man to perceive the true nature and origin of moral authority, and thereby to avoid the dangers to human well-being that still linger in the popular confusion of moral with external or supposedly supernatural authority. Only through the rationalistic habit of mind can men come to understand how important it is, on the one hand, to assert the rightful supremacy of moral authority, and, on the other hand, to deny the rightfulness of any external authority other than a common or social consciousness of the reality and rightfulness of the moral authority in each individual. It is therefore of supreme importance to continue without quarter to fight that obscurantism which is still endeavoring to keep the control of thought and conduct within the hands of those who assume to rule the spiritual domain by right of divine anointment.

The discrimination of the ethical from the economic motive has, I think, secondly, a practical value because it enables us to reaffirm with renewed assurance certain rules for the strengthening of ethical impulses which have long been recognized, but which have never been regarded as authoritative. If they follow legitimately as deductions from the principle which has here been laid down, their authority is clear.

Ethical motives, as all recognize, may be strengthened both by teaching and by activity. If I have rightly described the ethical motive, it is possible to see with much clearness what teaching and what activity are necessary for ethical culture, and to see, also, the order in which principles are to be emphasized and activities are to be encouraged.

Ethical motives, then, are to be strengthened first by reaffirming the doctrine, older even than any teaching of the Greeks, that the efficient cause of morality is manly and womanly power, is that vitality which, by its own insistence, creates a demand for expansion and variation of life. The ethical motive, as we have seen, springs from physiological

conditions; and, as power, it is derived from vitality. To neglect bodily development, therefore, is not merely to do wrong in a sense which all intelligent persons now recognize, by impairing the health that is in itself a good, but in the much deeper sense of impairing the very springs of moral conduct.

The ethical motive may be strengthened, secondly, by recognizing and teaching that varied experiences of pleasure within limits of moderation are essential to the existence of a consciously moral motive and a moral life. The organism which has had repeated experiences of many different kinds of enjoyment, associated with the normal activity of every organ, is the one that reacts most promptly and vigorously against any sort of excess or any over-indulgence in a particular pleasure. The Hedonists are absolutely right in their fundamental contention. Morality without pleasure of some kind or composition is unthinkable. As certainly as specific pleasures are the springs of economic action, so certainly are varied, measured, and combined pleasures the springs of moral action. The task of moral philosophy is not to condemn pleasure; it is rather to show how differently pleasures are combined and presented in consciousness, when they enter into the moral motive, than when they incite economic effort. We must frankly admit the essential goodness of pleasure, and deny that asceticism is in any sense ethical.

The ethical motive may be strengthened, thirdly, by reaffirming that excess is the fundamental wrong. By permitting attention to dwell too long or too exclusively upon any one subject of desire, we in some measure destroy the power of other desires, and not only dwarf our lives, but impair the moral motive. And this is just as true when our excesses are on the side of those things that are conventionally called "virtues," as when they are on the side of pleasures that public opinion condemns. In other words, the over-zealous Puritan, the moral or religious fanatic, the uncompromising political radical, when they refuse to recognize any interest in life other than the ones to which they are devoted, are, in the light of the physiological and psychological analysis which

has been presented, as immoral as the drunkard and the libertine. If this analysis is true, the middle way, which Aristotle described as the only true road of virtue, is indeed such; and no one can wander from it to the right hand any more than to the left hand, without falling into wrong.

The ethical motive is to be strengthened, fourthly, by teaching that next to moderation is the importance of cultivating a varied outlook and sympathy, and of cherishing ideals as an intellectual duty.

This is an age of specialization and of commercial standards. Men judge one another by their business success, and business brings a fearful pressure upon every man to devote his entire energy to some one line of activity in which he can hope to attain pre-eminence. This is in itself a plain violation of moral law, and there is nothing mysterious in the undermining of personal and public integrity through the insidious action of an excessive commercialism. That the business man who devotes his entire energy and thought to business matters should look without horror upon the control of politics and law by an unscrupulous use of money is no occasion for surprise. It is a normal and necessary consequence of the conditions supposed. Unhappily, our educational policy, which should be the great corrective of such tendencies, has been corrupted and made to encourage the very evils that education should prevent. We have encouraged specialization, which is a proper thing to do just to the extent that by specialization we mean thoroughness, minute and exact knowledge within a certain limited field. But specialization in this sense need not and should not be at the expense of a broad outlook upon the world and a correlative strengthening of varied sympathies. Education should make the average man see that business interests are but one small part of life, and that citizenship is a word of larger import than trade. It should make him feel a strong sympathy with every spontaneous popular movement. He should care about the well-being of other classes than the one to which he belongs. He should be interested in the progressive civilization of other nations than his own. Above all, he should be interested in

the history and development of thought, in the broadening of the mental horizon of the race, and in the expression of its struggles and aspirations in the enduring forms of literature and art. If the ethical motive is what I have here described it as being, then it is the duty of all teachers of morality to insist that any man who knowingly neglects to cultivate throughout his business or professional life some interest or interests that have no direct relation to his business or profession, who intentionally or by negligence permits his sympathies with all mankind, and with the progress of science and art to die, is an immoral man, as much to be condemned by a sound public opinion as one who transgresses the conventional code of right doing.

Moreover, the expansion of thought and sympathy must ideally extend into future time. The evolution of social relations is not ended, and the development of the human mind is not complete. The ethical motive does not merely constrain us to act with reference to the many-sidedness of life; it constrains us to act also with reference to the further development of life. It is therefore our duty to form and to cherish ideals. We must believe that many things can be made better than they are at present, and that life in many ways can be made more desirable. But these ideals must not be narrow, exclusive, or grotesquely disproportioned to one another, or to the world of fact. They must be brought into harmony, order, and measure. In fine, the ethical motive must be both strengthened and directed by reaffirming the Platonic doctrine of correlation, subordination, and proportion in all that we think and in all that we do.

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